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UNCLAS DHAKA 001354

SIPDIS

FOR I/FW, B/G, IIP/G/NEA-SA, B/VOA/N (BANGLA SERVICE) STATE
FOR SA/PAB, SA/PPD (LSCENSNY, SSTRYKER), SA/RA, INR/R/MR,
AND PASS TO USAID FOR ANE/ASIA/SA/B (WJOHNSON)

CINCPAC FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR, J51 (MAJ TURNER), J45
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USARPAC FOR APOP-IM (MAJ HEDRICK)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [OIIP](#) [OPRC](#) [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [BG](#) [OCII](#)
SUBJECT: Media Reaction: Secretary of State Rice's comments
on Bangladesh, Middle East: U.S. double Standard; Dhaka

Summary: Commenting Secretary Rice's remarks, English
language newspaper "Financial Express" says that the
government needs to answer the question of why Bangladesh is
being portrayed as a 'failed state' or a 'quite troubling'
country.

An op-ed page article in Islamic "Naya Diganta" alleges that
the United States' double standard in the Islamic world
spawns extremism.

[1](#)1. U.S. Secretary of State's South Asia Tour

"Does Bangladesh Deserve All Those Adjective?"

A page 1 commentary in centrist economic newspaper

"Financial Express" opines (3/23):

One cannot but be concerned by what US Secretary of State
Condoleezza Rice said about Bangladesh in an interview with
a leading Indian Magazine, India Today, recently. Rice has
found this country "quite troubling" and favored an Indo-US
joint role (to improve the situation).

The US Secretary of State's emphasis on joint role could
well be interpreted that the global super police asking
India to assume the role of a regional police more
aggressively.

A spokesman of the US embassy in Dhaka, however, when asked
by a news agency to comment on the Rice's statement, said
Monday that the US and India have not yet taken any joint
move. The answer was vague and carried no meaning. That is
expected because it is very difficult for a local level
diplomat to explain and interpret the statement of his or
her foreign secretary.

As expected there was no reaction from the Bangladesh
government to the Rice's statement published in the national
dailies quoting the Indian magazine. The helplessness on its
part is quite understandable.

But the government and the ministry of foreign affairs in
particular do need to give answer to one question that has
been agitating the minds of many: Why is there a sudden
upsurge in the efforts to portray Bangladesh as a 'failing'
or 'dysfunctional' or 'quite troubling' country?

The government may now feel inclined to spend money on image-
building activities right now. But without having a well
thought-out campaign plan in place such spending is unlikely
to pay any dividend. The campaign must be sustained and run
by competent people.

[1](#)2. Middle East: U.s. double Standard

"Washington's Double Standard Gives Birth to New Crisis"

An op-ed page article in Islamic Bangla language newspaper

"Naya Diganta" by military and security analyst Brigadier
General (retired) Shakhawat Hussein opines (3/23):

Although the U.S. sheds tears for democracy in the Middle
East, its focus is on Iraq, Syria and Iran. The Bush
administration is not so worried about other countries as
long as they remain within the sphere of the U.S. influence
and accept Israel's dominance. The so-called Islamic
Republic of Pakistan is going establish diplomatic relations
with Israel. Democracy in the style of Pakistan or
Afghanistan or the leadership of the life-long president of
Turkmenistan is acceptable to Washington if they lick
Washington's boots. Asaad's secular Syria or Bathist Iraq
was not acceptable. This double standard will not be
changed easily and, for that reason, new crisis and conflict
emerge, which may continue for many years. The ill attempts
being made by ultra right Christians and Jews to malign and
modernize Islam will not stop the emergence of new Bin
Ladens. The United States' double standard leads not only
Arab nations, but also Non-Arab Muslim nations to internal
conflicts and spawns so-called religious extremism. It is
not difficult to imagine that a bigger theater of conflict
will be created in the Islamic world, including the Middle
East, in the next decade.

THOMAS